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POLITICAL ASPECT OF CUBA'S ECONOMIC DISTRESS.

BY JOSIAH QUINCY.

THE close connection under modern conditions between economics and politics has rarely been more strikingly illustrated than by the present phase of the Cuban question. For three years our representatives have been dealing with the Island from a political standpoint, assuming that good government would bring with it the stability and prosperity essential to make Cuban independence even a hopeful experiment. They have only recently discovered that economic conditions and relations are of more fundamental importance than administrative improvements—that tariffs made at Washington have an even more vital connection with the future of Cuba than constitutions framed at Havana. The thoroughness with which this simple truth has at length been grasped by our executive authorities, and the commendable zeal which they are now showing in inculcating it, may partially excuse their tardiness in arriving at it.

But the consequences of this delay are surely serious enough; for the question of tariff concessions to Cuba has become one of extreme urgency before there is any Cuban government to deal with on a basis of reciprocity, yet when the inauguration of such a government is so near as to afford a plausible excuse for a fatal delay. The coincidence between the establishment of the nominal political independence of Cuba, and the discovery of her very real commercial dependence upon us, is certainly an unfortunate one. It would seem as if a reasonable degree of foresight might have avoided it, and that a Cuban government should have been instituted either sooner or later—not at the very moment of an economic crisis.

The excellent and authoritative article by Mr. E. A. Atkins in

the last number of the REVIEW, under the alarming but accurate title "Cuba's Imminent Bankruptcy," leaves nothing to be said as to the economic side of the historic Cuban problem in its newest form. But a brief discussion of the present situation from the political standpoint, and especially from the point of view which the present writer believes that the Democratic party should take, may be of timely interest as a complement to the treatment of the commercial issue. For, if economic considerations determine what Congress ought to do, political forces and arguments are more apt to decide what it will do.

The attitude and language of Secretary Root in meeting the crisis certainly leave nothing to be desired. It is fortunate, alike for Cuba and for our own country, that at this critical stage of their relations a man of his breadth of mind and courage has official charge of these relations and of their presentation to Congress. President Roosevelt fully shares the convictions of his Secretary of War, and evidently proposes to throw the whole weight of his Administration into the scale to avert the impending commercial ruin of Cuba. This, again, is most fortunate, and will bring about some relief, if any influence can do so. On the other hand, there is clearly a very powerful combination of interests, both in Congress and on the outside, to prevent any change whatever in the present tariff, and particularly to block any action in the direction of reciprocity. Moreover, the political influence of the growers of sugar beets and the manufacturers of beet sugar—to say nothing of the Louisiana growers of sugar cane—has increased very greatly in recent years, with the growth of that industry and its establishment in many States; and this special interest alone—which, from a selfish standpoint, has every reason to offer a determined opposition to the free entry of Cuban sugar—may well prove potent enough to prevent any action, even of a temporary character. On the whole, the outlook for the Cuban sugar planter is very doubtful, if not discouraging.

But, as anything beyond temporary relief at the best is apparently out of the question pending the establishment of the Cuban government, we may well look ahead to the real issue which underlies the whole situation—the issue which may have to be ignored officially on both sides for a short time longer, but which is none the less the *crux* of the whole matter. As the economic question in Cuba, dependent upon her external rela-

tions, is now seen to be of even greater importance than the political question of her internal government, so this economic issue is, in turn, swallowed up in—because it is included by—the larger political question of the annexation of the Island to the United States. With her incorporation into this country with the full rights of a State or of an organized Territory—including, of course, the right of freedom of trade within the limits of the Union—the economic question would be settled for Cuba, completely and finally; any other settlement must be partial and temporary. Whether or not the alliterative alternative between annexation and anarchy is a true statement of the only choice which the situation offers, there can be little doubt that every important consideration points to the former outcome as the best one now possible, both for the Cubans and for ourselves.

The present situation at Washington indicates that it may be necessary, a little later, for Cuba to play her last card, by asking for annexation, before she can win the rich economic stakes for which she is contending. Peace, plenty and happiness are the real objects sought by her people; her form of government, whether independent in the fullest sense or only within the wide limits allowed to a State of our Union—whether flying its own flag or under the stars and stripes—is only a means to these ends. If they can better be attained—and this can hardly admit of doubt—by the freedom of trade with this country which annexation, and nothing short of annexation, will bring—by the confidence which this will give to capital and the stimulus which it will offer to immigration—then Cuba should be wise and enlightened enough to grasp the substance of prosperity and liberty as an autonomous State, rather than cling to the shadow of national independence at the sacrifice of all her material interests. The only question is whether she will be governed by sense or by sentiment—by the reasonable judgment which has won for the English-speaking peoples their commanding position in the world, or by the impracticable idealism which has too often been the bane of the Latin races.

But it is said by some that the so-called Teller resolution precludes this country from annexing Cuba, with or without the consent of the people of the Island. The writer has always believed, with ex-Secretary Olney, to quote from a magazine article from his pen published in March, 1900, that this resolu-

tion, "ill-advised and futile at the time of its passage, if now influential at all, is simply prejudicing the interests of Cuba and the United States alike; no such resolution can refute the logic of the undisputed facts, or should be allowed to impede the natural march of events." That it is an embarrassing element in a delicate situation cannot be denied; that it is not and cannot be allowed to be the decisive factor is equally clear. The Congress that passed this resolution—which cannot have the binding force either of a constitutional amendment or of a treaty, though often treated as if it had the highest political sanctity—had no power to fix the future action of this country by an expression of pious intention.

Without such a resolution we should not deal unjustly or harshly by the Cubans, or annex them without their own consent; in spite of it we are not bound to exclude any policy which may be found for the best interest both of the people of the Island and of ourselves. If annexation is the outcome indicated by every dictate of statesmanship and of mutual interest, the dead hand of the Fifty-fifth Congress cannot hold us back from it. Moreover, the declaration by Congress of an assumed national intention "to leave the government and future of the Island to its people" after its pacification, cannot preclude them, as they were in no way bound by its terms, from seeking their economic salvation through political union with us; and it surely ought not to prevent us from granting them what is probably the essential condition of permanent pacification.

Further, if the Teller resolution ever had any binding force, it has been superseded by subsequent action taken by us and acquiesced in by the Cubans; and even if their acquiescence was given only under political duress, it is now one of the facts of the situation. This resolution disclaimed "any disposition or intention to exercise sovereignty, jurisdiction or control" over the Island except for its pacification; yet, under the provisions of the so-called Platt amendment, we are to exercise important rights of sovereignty, large jurisdiction, and very real control over the Island. The free Cuba dreamed of by her revolutionary leaders—an independent and sovereign international state—has been definitely abandoned, and we are to have instead a Cuba of limited powers, under an American protectorate, none the less real in fact because nowhere called by that name.

Our control over Cuban finance and sanitation under the provisions of the Platt amendment is practically whatever we choose to make it; our rights of intervention are of the broadest character, and we are to have all necessary naval and coaling stations. In short, our recognized relation to Cuba is to be very similar to the actual relation of Great Britain to Egypt. Cuba is to have, in several important respects, less than the rights of self-government possessed by a State of the Union; and our rights of control, which would be exercised by the President alone if Congress were not in session, leave her without the constitutional safeguards which protect the rights of our States from federal encroachment. Her flag will be but the emblem of autonomy; for independent nationality and full sovereignty she will not possess.

How, then, is political union, so desirable both from a Cuban and from an American standpoint, to come about? It can now come only after the establishment of a Cuban government; and it is, doubtless, desirable from a sentimental standpoint that such a government should be inaugurated, however short its life may be, as well as necessary from a practical standpoint that all due forms of negotiation should be gone through before the consummation is reached. We should do everything in our power to regard the sensibilities of the weaker party in effecting this union, and to respect that sentiment in favor of a free Cuba for which her sons have sacrificed so much. We should allow Cuba to reach the conclusion that annexation is best for her in her own time and in her own way, provided that the law and order for which we shall still be responsible be maintained in the meantime. But if we, from our side, and regarding our own interests, believe that voluntary annexation is the only satisfactory and permanent solution of the problem which has vexed our statesmanship for generations, there is no reason why we should grant as a permanent and free gift, to a quasi-independent Cuba, those commercial advantages which would constitute one of her chief inducements for seeking political incorporation with us.

In this matter we should distinguish clearly between our temporary duties to a dependent Cuba, under our military control, and our future obligations toward a Cuba with her own government. This year's crop of sugar cane will be gathered and ground substantially, if not wholly, under our rule; we are still responsible for the situation, and every consideration

of national honor calls upon us to relieve Cuba by remitting at least a large part, better the whole, of our tariff duties upon the present crop. If we fail to do so, and commercial disaster comes to Cuba in consequence, it will justly bring reproach, if not disgrace, upon our name. But when a Cuban government is once fairly established, and the people of the Island have had time to negotiate with us, through such a government, upon all questions affecting their economic and political status—when we have divested ourselves of the position of trustees for them, and can deal with them more or less at arms' length and as an independent contracting party—then the situation will be quite different. We can then set what political price we please upon the privilege of free access to our markets. Therefore, the writer, although a supporter of the principle of free trade, can see no reason why those who believe in the manifest advantages of Cuban annexation should surrender in advance, especially when our fixed national policy is protectionist, the most potent influence for bringing Cuban opinion to support political union.

If, after breaking by force of arms the political tie between Cuba and Spain, we should deny to the Island, so closely united to us geographically and so dependent upon us commercially, the privilege of political union with us—which we have already substantially accorded to Porto Rico, upon considerations by no means as strong—we should, indeed, be acting an ungenerous and odious part. That such a union may bring with it new problems and difficulties, even dangers, goes without saying, and we need not, therefore, too strongly condemn the conservative who shrinks from such a step. But nations cannot escape the reasonable consequences of their acts, any more than individuals; when we went to war with Spain we made Cuba our temporary ward at once, our permanent political partner whenever she was ready and willing to assume that character.

Doubtless, the beet sugar interests, and such others as may fear the effects of free competition with Cuban products, will be as strongly opposed to annexation as to reciprocity or reduced duties, and it cannot come without a contest. But the moment Cuba offers us annexation, she will appeal to a national sentiment so strong that no special interests can stand against it. They may succeed in defeating the economic proposal of reciprocity. They could not even long delay the acceptance of complete

political union; for that will appeal alike to the sense of justice and the reasonable patriotic ambition of the average American, and nothing can stand against the union of these sentiments.

The historic attitude of the Democratic party toward territorial expansion is thoroughly in harmony with the voluntary annexation of Cuba to this country, and its present opposition to imperialism is not in the least inconsistent with favoring such a policy. The platform of the last Democratic National Convention favors our national expansion "by every peaceful and legitimate means," and no one proposes that Cuba shall enter the Union otherwise. It declares expressly that the party "is not opposed to territorial expansion when it takes in desirable territory, which can be erected into States in the United States, and whose people are willing and fit to become American citizens." Cuba is certainly for many reasons most desirable and important territory to bring under American control, and large enough and near enough to be erected into one or more States. There is no reason to doubt that her people are as fit to become American citizens, after some preliminary political training and education, as are some millions of those who have already been incorporated into our citizenship; and, further, there is the certainty that annexation would lead to large immigration into Cuba.

The colonial imperialism to which the Democratic party is "unalterably opposed," is, in the words of the platform, that which is involved in "the seizing or purchasing of distant islands, to be governed outside the Constitution, and whose people can never become citizens." This is the case of the Philippine Islands, as to which the writer is a radical anti-imperialist and anti-annexationist; it is not the case of Cuba, which is practically contiguous territory and so situated as to be directly within the sphere of our influence and interests. If she cannot be governed by us otherwise than as the Philippines are governed, outside the Constitution, then, indeed, it might be better for us to leave the Island a political derelict. But there is no reason why Cuba cannot enter the Union in due season, as Louisiana, Florida and Texas entered the sisterhood of States. The Platt amendment provides for the application to a quasi-independent Cuba of a large measure of the irresponsible imperialism which we object to in the Philippines; annexation will regularize a political union which must exist to a considerable extent in fact, and will bring

it under the established limitations of the Constitution and of our fixed practice under it upon this continent.

Moreover, annexation is in harmony with the economic creed of the Democratic party, because it is the only practicable method for securing fully and permanently the enormous advantages of free commercial intercourse between Cuba and this country. Reciprocity is, indeed, better than nothing; but it is at best the partial enjoyment of benefits which should be fully realized. With the freedom of trade with this continent which Cuba would secure by political union with us, her possibilities for the production of wealth, in which we would so largely share, are great almost beyond conception. The incorporation of tropical territory within our national limits is all that is needed to round out our enormous and varied agricultural capacities. Cuba would be worth more to us in a year than the Philippines in a generation.

The rule of Spain in Cuba was a glaring anachronism for generations before it came to an end. The wonder is that it endured so long; in going over the record of our relations with the Island one cannot but be struck with the patience and forbearance shown by our government, in spite of the full recognition by many of our leading statesmen of the manifest destiny which would one day unite Cuba with America. John Quincy Adams in 1823, when Secretary of State, prophesied annexation within fifty years. "From a multitude of considerations," he wrote, "Cuba has become an object of transcendent importance to the commercial and political interests of our Union. Its commanding position, the nature of its productions and of its wants, give it an importance in the sum of our national interests with which that of no foreign territory can be compared, and little inferior to that which binds the different members of the Union together." These words require no change to make them applicable to the conditions of to-day. The limit of time allowed by Mr. Adams has been exceeded by nearly a generation and the destiny of Cuba is not even yet quite fulfilled; but it is getting nearer and more manifest. With a patience equal to that which we always exhibited toward Spain, with added consideration and sympathy born of our own sacrifices for Cuban liberty, we will wait for the Cubans themselves to offer us freely that political union, even more advantageous to them than to us, toward which the history of a hundred years has been tending.

JOSIAH QUINCY.